

Report of the 7th Meeting of the Standing Committee, June 1990

24/11/2000

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

7th Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee

Montreux, Switzerland, 26 June 1990

PROCEEDINGS

Participants

Members:

Canada (H Clarke) (Vice-Chairman), (J Pagnan)

Chile (R Schlatter)

Netherlands (R Wolters)

New Zealand (J Owen)

Pakistan (A Rao) (Chairman)

Poland (Z Krzeminski, K Dobrowolski)

Switzerland (P Goeldlin)

USA (L Mason, M Willis)

Permanent Observers:

UK (R Bone, D Langslow, M Ford)

IUCN (M Holdgate, P Dugan)

IWRB (J Patterson, M Moser)

Secretariat:

D Navid (Secretary General)

M Smart (Conservation Coordinator)

M Katz (Administrative Officer)

T Jones (Technical Officer)

C Samuel (Administrative Assistant)

Agenda item 1: Opening and Welcoming Remarks

The Chairman opened the meeting at 15:00hrs and welcomed members of the Standing Committee and observers. He extended a special welcome to the new representatives present from Poland and the Netherlands, and to the President of IWRB. Apologies for absence had been received from Mr A Antonietti of Switzerland and Mr S Kacem of Tunisia. He noted that this meeting of the Standing Committee would provide an opportunity to review the forthcoming Conference arrangements and the role of the Standing Committee.

The Secretary General expressed his delight with the facilities at Montreux made available by the Swiss authorities for the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. With 90 countries attending, the Conference would be the biggest to date, thus making arrangements more complicated than at previous meetings. To this end he was deeply grateful to IUCN, IWRB and Swiss conservation organizations for providing support staff. The Secretary General concluded that all the ingredients for a successful conference were present.

Agenda item 2: Review of Programme and Working Arrangements

Referring to documents which had been circulated at the start of the meeting, the Secretary General moved on to consider the daily activities of the Conference, responsibilities of the Standing Committee and of individual members of the Secretariat. He highlighted certain events which would provide an opportunity to meet on an informal basis such as the banquet, receptions and the various excursions. On Tuesday 3 July there would be Swiss Alpine day which would draw attention to wetland conservation activities in Switzerland. Each morning the Standing Committee, acting as the Conference Steering Committee, would meet to discuss the day's arrangements and similarly, there would be a Secretariat meeting each evening to discuss the day's events and work schedule.

The Secretary General then reviewed in detail the first day's programme which included welcoming addresses, the Ramsar video, adoption of the agenda and rules of procedure, election of officers, admission of observers, the keynote address and introductions to the various workshops.

Agenda item 3: Conference Responsibilities for the Standing Committee and for Individual Members of the Committee

The Chairman called on the Conservation Coordinator, who was responsible for the operation of the workshops, to introduce this item. The Conservation Coordinator stressed his hope that the workshops would provide a forum for lively discussion, despite the large number of participants likely to attend, and would not simply be a series of lectures. Recalling that it had been decided that the majority of workshops should be chaired by a member of the Standing Committee, each morning's Steering Committee meeting would provide an opportunity for the Chairpersons to discuss the smooth functioning of these sessions. Using an overview paper as a basis for summarizing the main objectives of the session, each workshop would be introduced by the Chairperson. Due to the late receipt of several national reports, the production of INF C.4.18 (Overview of National Reports) had been delayed but would still be an important document for the chairpersons and rapporteurs. The Conservation Coordinator expressed his willingness to answer any queries on the paper.

Agenda item 4: Role of Observers in the Conference

The Secretary General drew the attention of the Standing Committee to Doc C.4.16 'Admission of observers'. Certain observers, e.g., Intergovernmental bodies other than UN Agencies and non-governmental organizations required formal approval from the Conference before they could be admitted; in addition, national NGOs had to obtain approval from the government of the country in which they were located. The Secretary General hoped that all registered observers would be officially accepted, and he was pleased to announce the participation of observers from OECD and the World Bank for the first time at a Ramsar Conference.

Agenda item 5: Selection of Conference Officers and Members of Conference Committees

The Secretary General introduced Pierre Goeldlin, the Conference Chairman designate proposed by the Swiss authorities. To assist the Chairman, the Standing Committee would need to elect two Vice-Chairpersons; individuals familiar with the Convention, from different regions, in order to reflect a fair geographical balance. The Bureau suggested that Mr Rao from Pakistan and Mr Clarke from Canada be appointed. This suggestion was endorsed by the Standing Committee.

The establishment of the Credentials Committee also needed to be considered. Ideally the members of this Committee should also reflect a wide regional representation and priority should be given to delegations with more than one member. With this aim, the Bureau suggested Belgium, Egypt, Ghana, Suriname and the USA with the Federal Republic of Germany, India, Senegal, Uruguay and Australia as alternatives in the event that "first choice" countries were unavailable to stand for election. The representative from New Zealand voiced her concern that there was no representation from a Spanish-speaking country on the initial list of countries. This was rectified by the replacement of Suriname with Venezuela. In order to facilitate the process of electing the Credentials Committee during plenary session, it was agreed that during the welcoming reception, Contracting Parties should be approached by the Bureau to nominate and second the Standing Committee's proposals.

Agenda item 6: Review of Administrative/Policy Issues

The documentation concerning the Swiss proposal for amending the draft Resolution on Secretariat Matters had been circulated after the Sixth Meeting of the Standing Committee, and although it had received acceptance from a large number of Standing Committee members, there had not been unanimity. It was therefore re-submitted, according to the Standing Committee's Rules of Procedure, for consideration by the present meeting. The Chairman invited further comments from the Standing Committee on this paper. In general, the Swiss proposal was warmly received, with only minor amendments being requested. The Director General of IUCN asked that the phrase "co-location" should be included in point 1(a) and that in point 1(b) the phrase should begin with 'on behalf of the Standing Committee'. It was concluded that a revised version of the Resolution on Secretariat Matters should be circulated to the Conference with the aforementioned phrases included.

The Secretary General then asked the Vice-Chairman to introduce the document intended as a "chapeau" to Doc C.4.12 (Programme Matters). The Vice-Chairman congratulated the Standing Committee's Programme Sub-Group on the production of the Framework Document which he believed was an excellent overview of the aims of the Ramsar Convention. However, he believed

that there was a need to inspire the Parties, NGOs and other partner organizations to contribute even more to the work of the Convention and hence he had prepared the "chapeau". The Chairman invited the Standing Committee to comment on the paper. General enthusiasm was expressed on the content of the document and it was agreed that it should be circulated to the Conference as Attachment I, Addendum 1 to the Framework Document, DOC C.4.12.

Agenda item 7: Regional Consultations

The Chairman called on the Secretary General to introduce this item. The Secretary General pointed out that rooms had been allocated for regional meetings on the first evening and said that these regional meetings were designed to be informal in character; informal interpretation only would be available in both French and Spanish. The consultations should address any apparent regional problems and provided an opportunity for the various regions to decide on new representatives for the Standing Committee.

Agenda item 8: Bureau Programme Activities 1990, Income and Expenditure

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Secretary General reported on the Bureau's activities since the previous meeting of the Standing Committee. While great attention had been given to Montreux Conference preparations, he was pleased to announce that considerable progress had been made on the database and that the Technical Officer would be available to give demonstrations to interested parties in the course of the Conference. Monitoring Procedure missions had been carried out in Jordan, Pakistan, Tunisia and India. Owing to a generous grant from the Netherlands, it would be possible to appoint a "wise use" Technical Officer in the near future.

With regard to financial matters, the Secretary General thanked IUCN for the excellent facilities which had been made available to the Bureau. Referring to the Financial Report for 1989, the Secretary General noted that the accounts showed a technical deficit due to the Bureau's system of cash accounting. Some announced funding from 1989 had not been received until early 1990 and had therefore to be included in the 1990 accounts. The position for 1990 was fully satisfactory, as shown in the documents before the Standing Committee, but because of the Montreux Conference there had been an overexpenditure on telecommunications and it was still not known how much expenditure had been incurred for the Conference as a whole. This would be a major preoccupation for the Bureau during the summer of 1990. Concerning income, the Secretary General reported that in the triennium, 90% of financial contributions from Contracting Parties had been received to date; the Japanese contribution was still the largest not yet received but it was pleasing to be able to announce that Japan has pledged to pay this contribution in the current new fiscal year. The Bureau was advised that the USSR intended to commence payments from 1991 and receipt of the Italian contributions for 1989 and 1990 were understood to be imminent.

The Director General of IUCN congratulated the Bureau on the excellent state of its financial affairs and recommended the development of an operational reserve fund to provide the Bureau with financial stability. This was agreed by the Standing Committee and the Secretary General was directed to make proposals for the establishment of such a fund, endowed in the first instance by payments in arrears from Contracting Parties.

Agenda item 9: Any other business

The final item of business was conducted in closed session.

7th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Closed Session

Members:

Canada (H Clarke) (Vice-Chairman) (J Pagnan)

Chile (R Schlatter)

Netherlands (R Wolters)

New Zealand (J Owen)

Pakistan (A Rao) (Chairman)

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IUCN (M Holdgate, P Dugan)

IWEB (J Patterson, M Moser)

Secretariat:

D Navid (Secretary General)

M Smart (Conservation Coordinator)

Agenda item 9: Any Other Business

a) Grading of Secretary General's position:

The Vice-Chairman reported to the Committee on his consultations with the Director General of IUCN over the grading of the post of Secretary General. New, more detailed terms of Reference had been prepared for the post and it had been agreed that a review of the grading would take place in the autumn of 1990 in the course of the annual evaluation of the Secretary General's performance.

The Secretary General expressed his appreciation to the Vice-Chairman for his help in this matter and indicated that he was pleased with the outcome of these deliberations.

b) Staff transfers:

The Secretary General reported that two of the Bureau staff would be transferring to other IUCN posts in the summer of 1990. Christine Samuel, the Administrative Assistant in Slimbridge, would be commencing work with the IUCN Wetlands Programme as from 1 September 1990 and Philippa Cobley, one of the Bureau's Secretaries in Gland, would be commencing work with the IUCN Communications Unit as from 1 August 1990. The Secretary General praised the work of both Christine and Philippa and pointed out that the transfers represented career advancements for each. He also expressed his gratitude for the hard and dedicated work each had given to the Bureau and in particular to the Montreux Conference preparations. The Standing Committee endorsed this praise.

The Secretary General went on to announce that a very valuable staff member from IUCN, Julia Tucker, IUCN's Membership Administrator, would be joining the Ramsar Bureau as from 1 January 1991 to assume the function of Office Coordinator. He explained other proposed staffing changes including the immediate recruitment of a new Secretary in Gland, a Secretary/data assistant in Slimbridge, and a Wise Use Technical Officer in Gland. With these new staff members, it would become necessary to review the terms of reference of the present staff. The Standing Committee expressed its agreement with these developments.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the session at 18h00 hours.

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

ESPECIALLY AS WATERFOWL HABITAT